

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF INDIA

from one union to another and the cessation from work of those engaged in public utility services, unless fourteen days⁵ notice was given in writing.

The Public Safety Bill of 1928 had empowered the Government to confiscate funds from abroad and to deport undesirable Englishmen. It was twice rejected by the Assembly and finally had to be certified by the Viceroy. While the Debate was in progress prominent Left Wingers were rounded up and thirty-one of them were charged with "conspiracy to deprive the King of the Sovereignty of India."⁵³ These were kept in jail at Meerut for four years, including three Englishmen. In the end, one died in prison, twenty-six were sentenced either to transportation for life or sentences varying from three years upwards; three were acquitted. On appeal, sentences were reduced and some were released. The trial received wide publicity and evoked the solidarity of Labour all over the world. The nature of the charge led to the accused making long speeches to elucidate their principles. I well remember seeing youths carefully cutting out the reports from the papers and pasting them into books. It was their first textbook of Socialism! The Fawcett Committee in its report considered the demands of the workers and agreed that the prevalent conditions should not be varied to the disadvantage of the workers and that rates should be fixed by consultation with the workers' representatives and that there should be no victimisation.

In many of the strikes that took place at this time the police resorted to firing. Despite the arrest of leaders, others sprang up and on May 1st, "i 00,000 workers gathered at Chowpatty Sands in Bombay. In a short time nearly all the unions were in the hands of the Left. The cotton and oil strikes in Bombay were complicated by the outbreak of serious communal riots. This time of unrest was due to an